



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs  
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## **USDA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ALFALFA**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 7, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is seeking public comment to shape the scope of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS is prepared to assist in the determination of the status of genetically engineered (GE) Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa under APHIS biotechnology regulations.

Due to a court order, APHIS will prepare the EIS to evaluate potential environmental effects of deregulating the GE alfalfa. APHIS has identified 18 issues that will be studied in the EIS, which include impacts on food and feed, U.S. trade and threatened and endangered species. APHIS is seeking public comment to identify other issues that also should be addressed in the EIS.

In 2003, the Monsanto Company and Forage Genetics International submitted a petition to APHIS requesting nonregulated status for RR alfalfa lines J101 and J163. APHIS prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to determine whether deregulating the alfalfa, genetically engineered to resist the herbicide glyphosate (known commercially as Roundup), could have a significant impact on the environment. After a thorough review of the scientific evidence APHIS issued a finding of no significant impact and deregulated the lines on June 14, 2005. APHIS makes a determination of nonregulated status only when it can conclude that the organism does not pose a plant pest risk.

To comply with a judgment and order by the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, APHIS now must prepare an EIS in support of its 2005 decision to deregulate RR alfalfa. The court did not overturn federal conclusions regarding the safety of the crop for food and feed purposes, but rather concluded that APHIS had not adequately documented potential, or lack of potential environmental impacts. On March 23, 2007, APHIS published a *Federal Register* notice announcing that RR alfalfa was once again a regulated article. A future decision regarding the deregulation of RR alfalfa will be issued only after the completion of the appropriately documented EIS. For more information on RR alfalfa, go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa.shtml).

Notice of this action was published in the Jan. 7 *Federal Register*. Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Feb. 6. Send an original and two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2007-0044, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments also can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at

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<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2007-0044>. Click on “Add Comments” to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be viewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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